

THE HARMONIZATION OF ETHNIC TRADITIONS AND CULTURES: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Every One Admires PEACE



➤ ***The ongoing crises and conflicts witnessed by our Global Village in general and the Muslim world in particular, have left no place for the word – **PEACE** that most of the people admire and especially Muslims. Why it is so? What went wrong? How to solve our problems?***

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- **PEACE** especially among the Muslims has been lost as a result of the de-harmonization of the **material entity** and **the spiritual entity**, which has given birth to economic, political, ethnic, social and religious crises and conflicts.
- For Muslims, Islam is a comprehensive way of life that invites humans to deal with all the problems of life, individual and social, economic and political, national and international, in line with their commitment to God.
- Although, Muslims come from different ethnicities, yet they have to judge each other as well as non-Muslims according to *Shariah* (The Islamic Law).

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- Islam considers people's differences, like race, colour, language, tradition, culture, religion, etc., *as Sunnah of Allah* (the Divine Custom of God), which bring people closer to one another.
- The crises and conflicts created by such differences are solved by Islam's harmonization of people's outward and inward activities.
- The purpose of man's creation as *al-Khalifah* (the vicegerent) of the Almighty God, Allah (s.w.t.), acknowledges **human's universal equality, universal kinship, spiritual unity, and freedom of choice.**

Dīn al-Islām

- We, Muslims, the representatives of *Dīn al-Islām* know it very well that *al-Islām* is derived from the Arabic root *Salamah*, which denotes:
 1. **Al-Salaam** - السلام – Peace (in both Mind and Body);
 2. **Tasliim** - التسليم – Submission (of one's will to the Will of Allah)
 3. **Al-Khalas** - الخلاص – Salvation (from the hell fire)
 4. **Al-Ta'ah** - الطاعة – Obedience (to Allah – the Creator)
 5. **Al-Tasa'muh** – التسامح – Tolerance (of others)
 6. **Al-Ta'ayush** - التعايش – Coexistence (with others)
 7. **Al-Mahabbah** - المحبة - love (caring of others)

Dīn al-Islām

- In the religious sense *al-Islām* signifies:

A Complete Submission to the Will of Allah and Total Obedience to His Law

willingly without compulsion.

- *al-Islām* - a way of life comprehending the seen and the unseen aspects of life.
- Understanding of *al-Islām* does not require coercion, compulsion, or a negation of human nature or laws of the cosmos.
- *al-Islām* helps us to understand our own true nature and creation as a whole.

Dīn al-Islām

- *al-Islām* the only way to build a just, healthy, creative society.
- The Almighty *Allāh* (s.w.t.) has willed *Dīn al-Islām* to be a rational religion enjoining humankind in general and Muslims in particular through the medium of His Devine Message, the Holy *Qur'ān*, to employ their '*AQL* - intellect and reasoning in order to contemplate His Signs.
- This is done to understand the genuine Faith, and not to admit the superiority of reason over revelation.
- Revelation and Reason should complement each other. Thus, a just balance is made in one's vision of the TRUTH.

Dīn al-Islām

- *Dīn al-Islām* integrates the human soul and the sense of reasoning, making man capable of understanding the tenets and principles of *Allāh*'s religion as they are portrayed in the Holy Scripture.
- To bring back the lost peace and cure the plague that has infected most of the contemporary Muslim countries, it is required by all Muslims as a Nation - Ummah to **implement** the Divine Teachings of Allah.
- The core principle of *Dīn al-Islām* is an intertwined **harmonisation** of both **THEORY** and **PRACTICE**,

Dīn al-Islām

- *Dīn al-Islām* cannot be considered as a religion in a narrow import of the expression as it is applicable to other religions. Rather, it should be understood as something more than a religion perceived as:
 - a) a worldview (**Ethos**),
 - b) a code of ethics (**Ethics**),
 - c) a socio-cultural entity (**Ethnos**), and
 - d) a way of life that covers all humans' affairs like political, economic, social, cultural, religious, etc.

Dīn al-Islām

- *al-Islām* is the central characteristic of the Muslim world that unites people across ethnic backgrounds with different traditions and culture (Arabs, Persians, Aryans, Berbers, Turks, Malays, and etc.) across linguistic divides, and across vastly different environments.
- **What makes the Muslims to unite themselves under the banner of *al-Islām*?**
- **Is it wealth, beauty, position, race, colour, location, fame?**
- **Is none of them except – their true faith in *al-Islām*.**

Dīn al-Islām

- *Al-Islām* harmonizes the ethnic traditions and cultures through the following tenets:

1. Human's Universal Equality,

2. Universal Kinship,

3. Spiritual Unity, and

4. Freedom of Choice.

Dīn al-Islām: Human's Universal Equality

- In Islam, the concept of human equality is built on the premise that God is the Creator of every single human soul, and of all creatures and species living in existence, and there should not be any superiority in terms of origin or descent.
- No priority on the account of wealth, ethnic identity, lineage or social status, as all are regarded as equal and descendants of common ancestors. *Allāh* says in the Holy *Qur'ān*:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾ (النساء: 1)

O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single Person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; fear *Allāh*, through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for *Allāh* ever watches over you.

Dīn al-Islām: Human's Universal Equality

- The concept of human equality in Islam is authenticated by the declaration of the Holy Prophet, Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) in his speech during the Farewell *Hajj* in Mecca:

• «يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَلَا إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنَّ أَبَاكُمْ وَاحِدٌ أَلَا لَا فَضْلَ لِعَرَبِيٍّ عَلَى أَعْجَمِيٍّ وَلَا لِعَجَمِيٍّ عَلَى عَرَبِيٍّ وَلَا لِأَحْمَرَ عَلَى أَسْوَدَ وَلَا أَسْوَدَ عَلَى أَحْمَرَ إِلَّا بِالتَّقْوَى...»

- O you people! Indeed, your God is one and your father is one. No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab. Nor does a white man have any superiority over a black man, or the black man any superiority over the white man except the pious (people)....

Dīn al-Islām: Universal Kinship

- The absolute universalism of Islam that is the direct implication of *Tawḥīd* and meant for humanity as a whole, promotes the concept of universal human kinship.
- Every single human individual, group of people, or nation has to cooperate with each other in order to develop a God-centred consciousness. *Allāh* (s.w.t.) created all humans from a single pair of parents – Adam and Eve.
- Islam declares that since humans have the same origin, by virtue of their creation, they are enjoined to live together in solidarity and peace, where the sense of mutual respect, righteousness and better understanding of one another should prevail.

Dīn al-Islām: Universal Kinship

- The Holy *Qur'ān* states:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾ (الحجرات: 13)

- O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of *Allāh* is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And *Allāh* has full Knowledge and is well-acquainted (with all things).
- God's discourse is directed to mankind, i.e., Muslims and non-Muslims, even though they differ among one another in terms of race, colour, culture, location, beliefs and classes.

Dīn al-Islām: Spiritual Unity

- Spiritual unity of mankind is emphasized by Qur'an in order to promote spiritual solidarity and harmony among human beings all over the world.
- Such unity is the basic fundamental and inherent part of humans' natural disposition (*Fiṭrah*). To maintain the balance of spiritual unity among the humans, there ought to be acknowledged that God, Who has created every single human soul in the best form, is not *Rabb al-Muslimīn*, the Sustainer of Muslims. Rather, He is *Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, the Sustainer of the entire cosmos.
- Faith in the Unseen world makes people aware of their spiritual consciousness and leads them to their spiritual unity and close friendship.

Dīn al-Islām: Spiritual Unity

- Spiritual unity of mankind, in Islam, is a support for all spirituality, as man is in himself a unity and a vicegerent of his Creator on Earth. The Holy Qur'ān expounds the concept of spiritual unity of mankind in the following verses:

﴿كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ...﴾ (البقرة: 213)

- Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed;...

﴿وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ إِلَّا أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُوا وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ﴾ (يونس: 19)

- Mankind was but one nation, but differed (later). Had it not been for a word that went forth before from thy Lord, their differences would have been settled between them.

Dīn al-Islām: Freedom of Choice

- Man, according to Islam, is endowed with sound intellect that enables him to distinguish between good and bad. He has freedom of choice, which is the sole spirit or cornerstone of his life. Hence, man's life without freedom of choice becomes meaningless, while his dignity is insulted.
- Islam does not make one responsible for the deeds of another, nor is one to be given a burden except to what he/she is able to bear. Freedom of choice is clearly shown when *Allāh* says:

﴿مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ﴾ (آل عمران: 152)

- “Among you are some that hanker after this world and some that desire the Hereafter.”
- Such freedom leads to the freedom of religion and faith.

Dīn al-Islām: Freedom of Choice

- The freedom of choice, however, in the matter of personal Faith is ultimately conditioned by God's absolute and eternal power and knowledge, revelation of the truth and human understanding.
- Human beings, hence, remain free to accept or reject their faith. Islam grants everyone religious freedom and forbids its followers to exercise violence towards others in matters of faith.
- Force and compulsion will not change the hearts of people in order to embrace Islam. Rather, it is the inclusive spirit of this Divine Religion, which convinces the people to dedicate and submit themselves willingly and completely to God's Will, and hence join His religion.

Application

- Since the advent of Islam, Muslims have tried very hard to maintain a balance between their Faith and their Ethnic tradition and Cultural differences.
- From time to time among the Muslims there were learned and pious people who dedicated themselves to the betterment of the Muslim community.
- The great Righteous Caliphs, Abu Bakr al-Sidiq, Umar al-Khatab, Uthman, and Ali (may Allah be pleased with all of them), managed the welfare of the Muslims in the best of what they could do in line with Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah.
- Latter on, Muslims divided themselves into groups and sects because they gave priority to their ethnic traditional and cultural differences while judging each-other.
- Most of the Muslims up to our contemporary time have not learned lessons from the past. What we see today, it is like Muslims' history is repeating itself.

Application

- The Western perception about the reality on the bases of reason only, allowed the construction of many man made ideologies, which polluted the right picture of the TRUTH.
- The fall of the Ottoman Caliphate and the colonization of the Muslim world by the Westerners, made the life of the Muslims in general and the Muslim intellectuals in particular very difficult.
- Thus, many Muslims clergies and intellectuals were killed by the new masters who occupied the Muslim lands. Most of the leaders of the Muslim countries were installed by the New Masters in order to serve them and not their people.
- Thus, such situation led certain learned Muslims allover the Muslim world to construct organization with the spirit of change and reformation. In the Arab world, al-Ikhwan al-Muslimune took the lead. In India, al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah. In Turkey, the Jama'a al-Nursiyyah, which was inspired by the thoughts of Said Nursi, who revolted against the Secular system of Kemal Ataturk.

Application

- In Malaysia, after the independence from the British, the teachings of Islam were flourishing. Thus, many Islamic organization and educational institutions were established. For example, ABIM, PERKIM, JADIM, JAIS, etc., took the lead to contribute to their Muslim community, by promoting Islamic awareness up to our time.
- However, my focus will be on one of the well established Islamic organization known as – HIZMET - service to humanity – which has been initiated by the inspiring thoughts of the charismatic leader, Fethulah Gulen, who is a contemporary Muslim thinker and scholar.
- The wisdom and the teachings of Said Nursi have contributed to the development of this brotherly Muslim organization too.

Application

- The main focus of – HIZMET – has been education focusing more on the building of one's character and personality infusing Islamic teachings indirectly and directly through the teachers and students. Besides the Muslims this organization has targeted non-Muslims too. Thus, it has a universal approach by contributing to the betterment of humanity, which is in line with the Islamic universality.
- In Malaysia – HIZMET – has a center called – MTDS – Malaysia Turkish Dialogue Society, which through its various activities, like academic and social, exchanges ideas and finds solutions where both parties evolved benefit. Dialogue is seen the only solution for problems.
- MTDS has linked many Malaysia educational institutions with Turkish educational Institutions.

Educational Activities



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1- Rectorate | 7- Campus Student Dormitory Complex |
| 2- Faculty of Engineering | 8- Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences |
| 3- Faculty of Arts and Science | 9- Library – Cafeteria – Conference Hall – Club Rooms |
| 4- Faculty of Arts and Science Classrooms | 10- Fitness Center – Bank – Post Office |
| 5- Vocational Schools | 11- Astro Pitch Sport Facilities – Basketball and Tennis Courts |
| 6- Preparatory School Complex | 12- Covered Sports Hall |
| | 12- Parking Area |



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CONCLUSION

- Harmonization of ethnic traditions and cultures within the perspective of Islam is that all Muslim ethnic (linguistic, cultural, territorial and racial) groups are considered as one nation – UMMAH or state - Dawlah.
- Prophet Muhammad (a.s.w.) after his migration from Makkah to Madinah, constructed and established the first Islamic state and the Islamic UMMAH with universal nature, where the geographical, linguistic or racial barriers are not recognized.
- Thus, Muslims should treat every human based on divine justice addressed in the Quran and promoted by the Prophet (a.s.w.) and the learned Muslim scholars.

CONCLUSION

➤ ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾
(الحجرات: 13)

➤ ﴿وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ﴾ (فصلت: 34)

➤ ﴿وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ﴾ (فاطر: 19)

➤ ﴿وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ﴾ (فاطر: 20)

Cont...

THANK YOU VERY MUCH

**MAY ALLAH (S.W.T.) BLESS ALL
OF US. AMIN**